Of Preparation for Death and Judgment.

A

SERMON

Preached at

WHITEHALL

January 27. 169$\frac{4}{5}$.

Before the Right Honourable the Lord *Chamberlain*, the Ladies of the *Bed-Chamber*; and others of the Houſhold to our late Gracious QUEEN *MARY* of Bleſſed Memory.

By GEORGE STANHOPE, *Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majeſty.*

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St. Matth. XXIV. 44.

Therefore be ye alſo ready; for in ſuch an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.

FROM the Diſciples ſhewing our Lord the Buildings of the Temple, He takes occaſion, in the begin- *v.* 1.
ning of this Chapter, to foretell *v.* 2.
the lamentable Extermination of the Jewiſh People, and the utter Ruine of that Holy Place. Satisfying herein, ſo far *v.* 3, &c.
as his Divine Wiſdom thought fit, their Curioſity; who deſired to know the preciſe time of thoſe dreadful Puniſhments God kept in reſerve, for the malicious Enemies of his Son, and the Truth. But, in regard there was one Day a more eminent Diſcrimination to be made, between them that believed in *Jeſus*, and them that believed him not; a Diſtinction, not confined to one particular Place or People, but Univerſal, and ſuch as none of the Sons of *Adam* can poſſibly be exempted from; a Proceſs and Sentence of

that infinite conſequence, that the Tribulation of the *Jews*, horrible as it was, ſhould be but a faint and feeble Image of the Vengeance of the Lord, and the Terrors of the Wicked in That Day; our Saviour does therefore prudently improve this Opportunity into a Diſcourſe concerning That alſo. In which, he repreſents it as a Thing of the higheſt and moſt general Concernment; the Laſt Great Revolution, which the Perſons to whom he ſpoke, and all Chriſtians after them, were obliged daily and hourly to expect, and diligently to prepare for. Upon which account it is, that he expreſſes himſelf in ſuch Terms, as might awaken their Souls, and quicken their Care; by ſhortening its diſtance to the Eye, and declaring it not only certain, but nigh at hand to every one of them. For thus (according to the known uſage of Prophetick ſtyle, involving withal, and looking forward to the Antitype, when the Type is more directly mentioned) I underſtand that paſſage; *Verily I ſay unto you, This Generation ſhall not paſs till all theſe things be fulfilled; Heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, but my words ſhall not paſs away.* *v.* 34. 35.

Several remarkable Diſpenſations of an avenging

avenging Providence had been exhibited to the preceding Ages of the World, which might and ſhould have been abundant Intimations, *v.* 37. that God would not fail to call Sinners to Judgment, and repay them to their face. Theſe ought to have made Men wary, and prevailed upon them to live, as becomes thoſe, who know they muſt render an account of their Actions. But, notwithſtanding ſo many repeated Inſtances of a ſevere *v.* 38, 39. Reckoning, our Lord foreſaw, that there would be vaſt numbers ſtill unmov'd, and unprepar'd; inſomuch, that the Son of Man's Coming ſhould not more reſemble the Flood, which drowned the old World, in the Horrour and Univerſal Extent of the Judgment, than it would in the Surpriſe and Indiſpoſition of Men to meet him. Juſt ſuch another ſweeping Deluge ſhall This prove, as Swift, as Fatal, as Aſtoniſhing, to all, who by timely Thought and due Vigilance are not ready *v.* 40, 41. for the ſudden and amazing Separations it ſhall make. *Watch therefore, for ye know not what* *v.* 42. *hour your Lord doth come.* And farther yet; Becauſe we ought to be much aſhamed; that *the Children of this World ſhould be ſo much wiſer in their Generation than the Children of Light*;

the

the Example of a careful Houſholder is propounded, as a freſh Incentive to our Diligence. For if He would moſt certainly have watch'd, could he but have learn'd at what time the Thief would come; how much more ought We to be upon Our Guard againſt the Son
v. 43. of Man's coming, which for its own ſuddenneſs, and our unpreparedneſs, is compared to that of a Thief in the Night. If He, I ſay, the extremity of whoſe damage is ſuppoſed not to exceed the Breaking up of his Houſe, and the loſs of ſuch Goods, as Time and Providence have a thouſand ways of Reſtoring; how much rather We, whoſe Treaſure is greater, and whoſe Danger is infinitely greater, and whoſe Loſs, if once ſuſtained, is for ever irreparable! *Therefore be ye alſo ready*, for, as at a time when that Houſholder is not aware, the Thief ruſhes in upon him, ſo *in ſuch an hour as you think not, the ſon of man cometh.*

This I take to be the true order and connexion of what our Lord hath deliver'd upon this matter, from Ver. 29. to that of my Text incluſively. Upon which, that I may diſcourſe in the moſt clear and familiar, as well as what I conceive the moſt profitable manner, give me leave to obſerve this following method. I. *We*:

I. *Firſt:* To propoſe ſome Obſervations leading to a right apprehenſion of the Words themſelves.

II. *Secondly:* Coming up to the Point in my Text, To ſay ſomething of the Suddenneſs of the Son of Man's coming, and how that Quality belongs to it.

III. *Thirdly:* To lay down ſome Directions, how we may be ready to meet him, at that Coming of His.

IV. After all which, if the Time will allow me to draw an Inferenee or two from the foregoing Heads, I ſhall fully ſatisfie my Intentions in the Choice of this Subject.

I. I begin with ſome Obſervations relating to the Words themſelves, and preliminary to the main Buſineſs, and immediate Intent of them.

1. And here, firſt of all, I cannot but take notice, That *the Son of Man's coming*, whatever that Expreſſion means, is not at all attempted to be proved, but declared only, and ſpoken of as a ſufficiently known and unconteſtable Truth. The manner of it indeed, and his Pompous Appearance, are largely deſcribed; the Suddenneſs of it, and the Improvidence of the World, are particularly foretold; many

many importunate Exhortations to qualify, and put our Souls in due posture for it, very movingly insisted upon; and the end of this Coming, both in This and the following Chapter, manifestly declar'd to be, the taking an account of his Servants, Examining how each of them had acquitted themselves in their respective Trusts and Capacities, and Awarding to every one his Portion and Recompence accordingly. From all which it is exceeding plain, that the last General Judgment is meant by it, when *All men shall give account for their own works, and they that have done Good shall go into Life Everlasting, and they that have done Evil into everlasting Fire.* But of the Judgment it self, there are no pains taken to argue, and evince, that such a thing should be; because this was already an establish'd notorious Principle: And none of those with whom our Saviour now conversed, were so bold to call it publickly into question, or so ignorant, as to admit any doubt concerning it, in their own private Opinions and Consciences.

2. But secondly. Though by this *Coming of the Son of Man* the General Judgment be principally intended, yet to any that shall compare

compare this paſſage in St. *Matthew*, with its parallel in St. *Mark*, it will be very obvious, that This cannot be the only thing meant by it. Our Lord adds there, *What I ſay unto You, I ſay unto All*: Intimating hereby, that the Cautions he lays down, and the Reaſon of them concern not ſome few, or one generation only, but were equally applicable to every ſucceeding Age of Chriſtians to the World's end. It is alſo evident even to ſenſe, that the Day of Judgment, literally ſpeaking, did not ſurpriſe thoſe very perſons, to whom theſe Oracles were delivered: There having run out ſince their deaths, more than ſixteen hundred years already; and at what diſtance that Day may ſtill be from us, none but God can tell. If then we can diſcover any other thing, which every man is equally concerned to provide for, and which may very juſtly be termed the Coming of the Lord, there will be all the reaſon in the world for extending our Saviour's diſcourſe to That alſo. Now ſuch in every Circumſtance is the Day of our Death; This being to every ſingle man in particular, what the Laſt Judgment will be to the whole world in general. The ſuddenneſs of its

Mark 13. 37

v. 36.

coming may be the ſame; the ſtate of our Souls will be the ſame, and conſequently the Danger of being unprovided muſt needs be the ſame. For theſe Two have a ſtrict connexion, and abſolute dependance upon one another. And 'for this reaſon (ſays 'St. *Auguſtin*) he ſpeaks to All, things which 'in their literal ſenſe belong to ſuch only as 'ſhall be found alive at his ſecond Coming, 'becauſe they do really in this reſpect con-'cern All, that the Laſt Day ſhall find them 'in the very ſame condition, that the laſt 'day of their Life left them in. Such as e-'very one dies, ſuch ſhall he come to Judg-'ment. And hence it is his duty to watch 'for the Lord's Coming, becauſe that Laſt 'Coming ſhall find him unprepared, if his 'own death found him ſo. To the ſame purpoſe St. *Jerom*, in his Comment on *Joel* 2. '*By the Day of the Lord*, ſays he, underſtand 'the Day of Judgment, or the Day of eve-'ry particular man's Departure out of the 'Body. For what ſhall be done in the Day 'of Judgment to All, the ſame is fulfilled, as 'to each ſingle perſon, in the Day of his 'Death. With theſe two Fathers agree the Generality of ancient Interpreters, and upon the

Epiſt. 80. *ad Heſych.*

the ſame ground too. So little it ſeems were thoſe Good men ſenſible of a middle ſtate for the Purging men's Souls by Fire, or any other way of putting thoſe into a Capacity for Heaven afterwards, who were not ſo at their Entrance into the Chambers of the Dead,

3. Thirdly. It is well worth a Remark, That although both theſe *Comings of the Son of Man* be intended, yet That only of the Laſt Judgment is mentioned. And a great deal of Reaſon there is, why it ſhould be ſo: Becauſe This being the Laſt ſolemn Appearance of Quick and Dead, attended with all that Terror and Pomp, which we find deſcribed in Scripture, would naturally (if any thing would) work mens minds up to a becoming Senſe, and mighty Apprehenſion of their Danger. Whereas Death is become ſo ordinary, that the very Commonneſs of it, (which ought in reaſon to move us the more) hath render'd it familiar: And therefore This would have been mentioned, as it is ſeen and diſcourſed of every day, without any great matter of Efficacy or Impreſſion. To which we muſt add too, that, were it not for that Great Audit before God's Tribunal, there can be no account at all given, why we ſhould be in any degree ſolicitous to prepare for Death. For

what is This, conſidered in it ſelf, but only a Diſſolution of Soul and Body, a State of Darkneſs and Oblivion; a Fate common to all things under the Sun? And ſo not worth the leaſt part of our Care and Concern, any otherwiſe than as it conſigns us over, and leads us directly to that General Hearing. But upon this account, every body muſt confeſs, that we lie under the ſtricteſt Engagements to work, while this ſhort *Day* of Life continues, becauſe Our Sun draws toward ſetting, and the *Night comes on* apace *wherein no man can work*: Or, in the Preacher's Language, to *do whatſoever we attempt with* the utmoſt of *our might, becauſe there is no Device nor Knowledge*, no Repentance, no Reformation, or Improvement of our ſelves, *in the Grave*, whither we are all going.

From theſe three Conſiderations thus premiſed, you eaſily diſcern the ſubſtance of my Text to be this: 'That it is the Duty of every Chri-'ſtian, as he values his Safety and his Soul, to 'bear conſtantly in mind, and make good Pro-'viſion againſt the Second Coming of the Lord; 'whether that be the Laſt Great Judgment, or, 'which in effect will be all one to Him, the 'Time of his own Death; ſince this is but 'a Preface to that Judgment, and only reſerves

'him

'him bound up in Fetters of Sleep and Earth, 'till the Almighty Judge ſhall unlock our cloſe 'dark Priſons, and Summon us all to our Trial. For the *Coming of the Son of Man* in both theſe Senſes is ſure, and therefore it concerns every one to be ready: Eſpecially if we reflect again, that there is a hazard, nay, a high probability of his *coming in ſuch an hour as we think not*, which leads me to the

II. Second Particular I promiſed to diſcourſe of, The Suddenneſs of the Son of Man's Coming, and in what Senſe that Quality belongs to it.

Now an Accident is reputed Sudden, either with regard to the Time when it happens, or the Perſons to whom it happens; either when it comes immediately, and without any notice of it beforehand; or when it overtakes Men unawares, at a Seaſon in which they leaſt think of it, and before they have competently arm'd themſelves againſt it. In the former of theſe Reſpects, the *Son of Man's Coming* is not, cannot be ſudden: For,

1. If by that Coming we mean the General Judgment, Who can have the Confidence to pretend, that This is brought upon the World in a trice, and without ſufficient notice? Did not the Prophet *Daniel*, above two thouſand years

years ago, declare to his People what God had
Dan VII. 9, 10. shewed him in a Viſion, when *his Throne was like a fiery flame, and his wheels like burning fire, thouſand thouſands miniſtred unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtood before him, when the Judgment was ſet, and the Books were opened?* Did not
Ch. XII 2. the ſame Mouth proclaim aloud in Chap. 12. *That they who ſleep in the duſt of the Earth ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting Life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting contempt?* So that even before the Light of the Goſpel ſhone forth, there were Intimations in abundance given, that the Almighty would ariſe to Judgment, and reward every Man according to his work. But we have a much ſurer word than that of Prophecy, The expreſs Teſtimony of our Bleſſed Lord, and his Holy
Joh. V. 22. Apoſtles; That very Son *to whom the Father hath committed all Judgment*, tells us in the fol-
Ch. XXV. 31, 32. lowing Chapter, that *He will come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, that he will ſit on his Throne, and all Nations ſhall be gathered be-*
V. 31. *fore him:* And in this Chapter, *That he will ſend his Angels with a great ſound of a Trumpet, and they ſhall gather together his Elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.* St. *Paul* accordingly hath forewarned the *Corinthians*, and in Them all to whom that Epiſtle ſhould come,

come, *That we muſt all appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* 2 Cor. V. 10. He hath likewiſe preſſed the *Athenians* to ſpeedy Converſion and Repentance, from this moſt unanſwerable Argument, that *God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* Acts XVII. 31. St. *Peter* acquaints us yet farther, That the delay of this Judgment had tempted ſome ungodly and inconſiderate Wretches, to queſtion, whether there would ever be any ſuch thing. But while thoſe *Scoffers* ridiculed Religion, and rallied this uneaſie Doctrine, with that impious Taunt, *Where, where is the Promiſe of his Coming?* He teaches Us to entertain quite different Notions of the matter. *Beloved,* ſays he, *be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day. The Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe, as ſome men count ſlackneſs, but is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the night.* 2 Pet. III. 3, 4. v. 8, 9, 10.

night. To all which, and many other expreſs Teſtimonies of Scripture, if we add the conſtant Dictates and private Impulſes, the Applauſes and the Reproaches of Conſcience, which, according to the Quality of each moral Action, never fail to ſtrike us with ſome expectations of a diſtant Reward or Puniſhment; If we reflect upon the Reaſonableneſs, the Neceſſity of ſuch a thing, in order to a publick Vindication of the Divine Juſtice, and a perfect clearing of the dark and myſterious methods of Providence, which with ſuch ſeeming Indifference diſtributes the Good and Evil Things of this preſent Life: Theſe will appear ſo many evident invincible Proofs of a future Judgment; and we cannot with any Forehead pretend, that Almighty GOD hath been wanting, either to inform us that it ſhall be; or to warn and fortifie us againſt it.

2. But Secondly. If by the *Son of Man's coming*, be underſtood our own Death, alas! where do we not meet with freſh Remembrancers of that? Beſides, that Almighty GOD hath ordained this Coming, as a neceſſary Introduction to the other, for *It is appointed unto Men once to die, and after that, the Judgment*; Beſides this, I ſay, every thing we ſee, or hear, or know, turns our Monitor, and we muſt be blind and deaf

Hebr. IX. 27.

deaf not to be ſenſible, and perfectly ſtupid, not to apprehend and conſider it. Every dying Year, every declining Day, every drooping Flower, and falling Leaf, are but ſo many Emblems of our certain Mortality. And, for fear we ſhould neglect theſe as Inſtances too remote, and too little concerning us, the continual Change of our own Bodies brings the Matter home, and makes the unwelcome Application for us. For in deſpight of all the vain Flatteries, and perverſe Reaſonings of Fleſh and Blood to the contrary, the unſteady condition of Human Nature is a moſt ſenſible, an ever-preſent Argument, that as *Man comes up like a Flower*, ſo there is no Remedy, but one way or other he muſt be *cut down like it* too. If he eſcape the rude Aſſaults of ſad untimely Accidents, if neither Violence crop him off, nor Sickneſs blaſt him in the Bud, yet the Slower decays of Age will be ſure to wither his Beauty, and make his Strength bend and ſtoop, till he be forced down into his native Earth again. And yet in all this Compariſon there is, as *Job* well obſerves, one mighty Diſproportion, That of a *Plant or an Herb there is hope, that it will ſprout again*; The return of the Year and a kindly Seaſon may cheriſh it, or the Care of the Cultivater and Refreſhing Moiſture

Job XIV. 1. v. 7. 8. 9. 10.

may make it bud, and *hinder the tender Branch*
V.11,12. *from ceasing*; But Man *dieth and wasteth away, he lieth down, and riseth not, till the Heavens be no more.*

Or if the Examples of other Creatures be not drawn into Consequence, nor the gradual Decays of our own Persons duly attended to, yet where these have accomplished their full work, how prodigiously impenetrable must we be, not to take the Impression? The same common Nature is imparted to all Men, and all are liable to the same Dangers and Infirmities. Our own late sad Experience hath convinced us, that neither Youth nor Vigour, neither Piety nor Power, is Defence sufficient against this Fatal Blow. If any Humane Excellence could get above it; if the most Zealous Prayers, and United Wishes of Good People, could suspend it; that Royal Patern of Virtue, whose Life was worth ten thousand of Ours, had not so soon left us this most afflicting Instance, That not Any, not even the Greatest, not even the Best, can have any pretence to think themselves exempted from a Destiny, that is inflicted without Distinction, upon Persons of all Ages, all Conditions, and all Constitutions. And of this indeed we have Experiments without number, the ful-

fulleſt Evidence that can poſſibly be given. For the laſt Groans and Agonies of departing Souls, the ſad Solemnities of Funerals, the dejected Looks and mourning Weeds of Melancholy ſurviving Friends, and the ſtill more melting Sighs and Tears of the poor Widows and Fatherleſs, bereaved of their beſt Comfort and Support; Theſe are Objects, that in every time, and every place, do ſo conſtantly preſent themſelves to our view, that a Man muſt even go out of the World not to meet with them. How then ſhall we call that Coming of our Lord ſudden for want of ſufficient notice, which we are ſo many ſeveral ways, and ſo continually reminded of, that without doing the extreameſt Violence to our Reaſon, and our Senſes, it is impoſſible for us not to expect and daily apprehend it?

But I obſerved before, that an Accident is ſometimes reputed Sudden, as well in regard of the Perſon to whom it happens, as of the Time when it happens. And certainly, that Obſervation never met with ſo many Experimental Proofs in any one Inſtance, as it does in the Caſe before us. For it would really amaze any thinking Man, to reflect how the Generality of the World behave themſelves upon this occa-

ſion; and how very ſmall a part of their Care they make it, to provide for the Coming of their Lord in either of the forementioned Reſpects. They commonly profeſs, to believe a Future Judgment with the higheſt degree of Aſſurance that is poſſible; They make frequent and pathetical Harangues upon the Certainty of Death, and the Shortneſs of the Time permitted us here upon Earth; They pretend too to be ſenſible, that upon this fleeting Moment depends an Eternity of Bliſs or Woe; That their Immortal Souls, and all that can be called Precious, lie at ſtake, and muſt be dealt with hereafter, as this little Span of Life is improved now: But ſtill, as if they had made a Covenant with Death, and were in League with Hell; their Converſations argue a quite contrary Perſwaſion; their Affections and Deſires fix and terminate here below; and by a ſtrange ſort of unthinking Perverſeneſs, the periſhing Trifles of this World wholly poſſeſs and employ them; while the main End and Buſineſs of their Creation, the Concerns of a Future and Better State, (which are in truth the only Things worth a Man's Conſideration and Pains,) are ſcarce allowed any place at all in their Thoughts and Memories.

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How Prodigious, and withal how Dangerous a Folly this wretched Negligence is, you need not be told any more, after what hath been already delivered in the Beginning of this Diſcourſe. And therefore, without farther Enlargement to repreſent it here, I ſhall deſcend to my

III. Third Particular, 'Wherein I propoſed 'to lay down ſome Directions, how we may 'eſcape the Condemnation of ſuch careleſs 'Men, and what courſe we muſt take, to be 'found ready to meet our Lord at his Coming.

And here I ſhall inſiſt upon ſuch Rules only, as I find given by our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf upon this very Occaſion. Now they are eſpecially Four; Two of which are Negative, and regard ſome Vices, which muſt be declined; The other Two are Poſitive, and preſcribe ſome Duties to be obſerved. The Vices to be avoided, are *Senſuality*, and *Love of the World*; and againſt theſe our Lord gives this Caution: *Take heed to your ſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenneſs, and Cares of this Life, and ſo that Day come upon you unawares.* In which Words, the Advice is given in ſuch a manner, as at the ſame time to diſcover the Ground upon which it proceeds; and wherein the Danger of being addicted to ſuch

Luke XXI. 34.

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a Courſe of Life conſiſts. For by this means, it ſeems, Men are expoſed to Surpriſe, and apt to have their *Hearts overcharged.* My preſent Intent from hence is to ſhew, that This is the Natural and Unavoidable Conſequence of thoſe Vices, and ſo that they cannot but be moſt pernicious Hindrances to a Chriſtian's Preparation for Death and Judgment.

1. The Former of theſe is Senſuality, which our Lord hath expreſſed by *Surfeiting and Drunkenneſs*; Intending I ſuppoſe hereby, not only thoſe two Sins, barely conſidered in themſelves; but all the curſed Effects of Gluttony and Intemperance, and the many vile Luſts, and Miſchiefs, that are wont to follow thereupon. For the Indulging an Habitual Practice of theſe Vices diſcompoſes the Inward, no leſs evidently, than it diſtempers and deſtroys the Outward Man. For as here they pall the Appetite, vitiate the Palate, clog and dull the Animal Spirits, and in one word, render the Body a Sink of Diſeaſes and Ill Humours; the very ſame Effects in Proportion have they upon the Mind too. From hence Men's Love of God and Eſteem for Goodneſs grow faint and cold; Their Inclinations and Deſires are perfectly changed, and corrupted; They loſe all Reliſh of true and manly

manly Satisfactions, and can no longer taſt any thing that is Rational, and Heavenly, and Pure. Thus, while they are gorged with carnal Delights, they become liſtleſs, and heavy, and unactive; degenerate into Fleſh and Senſe; grow more and more unfit for any Attempt, that becomes Men and Chriſtians; and at laſt lye utterly ſunk and buried in Spiritual Stupidity and Sloth. Now all this proceeds, partly from the Intimate Union between the Soul and Body, and partly from the Oppoſition between theſe Two in the Buſineſs of Religion. Hence it comes to paſs, that as oft as we pamper the Fleſh, we do at the ſame time not only load our Better and more refined part, but we cheriſh a deadly Foe too. Whereas on the Contrary, a Religious Sobriety keeps men awake and active; gives them leiſure to be cool and ſerious; admits ſo neceſſary thoughts as Death and Judgment; and ſuggeſts, that upon Them depends the Bliſs which Immortal Spirits were deſigned to attain. A Senſual man hath only his Intervals, and ſhort ſnatches of Thinking, and even in Them, the Byaſs is upon his Judgment; and incredibly hard it is to raiſe him up to any tolerable Eſtimate of Heaven and Intellectual Joys. But Mortification and Temperance leave us free and unprejudiced,

judiced, give us a right turn of Soul, and Reaſon room to exert it ſelf; They inſpire us with a generous diſdain of all Earthly Enjoyments, and diſpoſe us to thirſt after another World, rather than to take up with the Treacherous Soothings of This. For by removing our falſe Opticks, and ſhewing every thing to the naked Eye, they ſoon convince us, how very little the Gayeſt Man here can arrive at; the bitter Concluſion Sinful Pleaſures are like to find; and the many Dreadful Snares and Inconveniences, which Eaſe and Luxury betray Men to.

2. The Second Thing our Bleſſed Saviour adviſes his Diſciples againſt, is the Love of the World. *Take heed* (ſays he) *that ye be not over-charged with the Cares of this Life.* Where, by forbidding to engage too deeply in ſuch Cares, you may be very confident, it is no part of his meaning, that we ſhould ſo entirely lay our ſelves out upon the next Life, as to look after no proviſion for a Convenient Subſiſtence in This: But, as in *Matt. 6.* he blames ſuch degrees of Anxiety, as argue unworthy Diſtruſts of Providence, and ill ſute a Chriſtian's Faith; ſo here he condemns that criminal Exceſs of Care, which diſorders Men in their Duty, and takes their minds off from their own Mortality, and

Luk. XXI 34.

and the Regard for another world. Every ones own Experience would quickly teach him, if our Saviour had not done it to his hand, what inconsistent things the service of God and Mammon are; and how impossible it is, at one and the same time, to be extreamly solicitous for this world's Goods, and to *seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness* with any becoming degree of Affection and Zeal. The matter indeed is so ordered, that these Cares in any Condition are the most dangerous snares a Man can fall into. If he be poor, and struggling hard for a Competency; Then they perplex and distract him, they fill him with a thousand mean despondencies, and expose him to all the little shifts, and base Arts of unjust Gain. If he be wealthy, and a Desire of increasing Riches occasion it, nothing can be more directly opposite to the Duty of Preparation in my Text: For Abundance and Success commonly inflame those desires, and render the mind but more Sordid and Abject; They fasten the Soul down to the vanities of this World, and will not suffer it to soar up to another. But above all, they render the thoughts of Death, and leaving those belov'd Treasures a most tormenting Consideration. So that every way this immoderate

Solicitude is irreconcileable with a Chriſtian's making ready to meet his Lord. For the Indigent Man that is over-charged with it, gives himſelf no leiſure to provide for his Coming; and the Rich Man cannot endure to think of it. And no wonder then if Men thus clogg'd and incumber'd do not eſcape that *Snare*, which the Luk. XXI 35 Goſpel ſays that Day ſhall prove to *all them that dwell*, but eſpecially to Them that ſo dwell, as to ſet up their Reſt, *on the Earth.*

To the Two fore-mentioned Evils our Lord oppoſes as many Poſitive Virtues, which may aſſiſt and further us in our Proviſion for his Approach.

The Former of theſe is Watchfulneſs. By which we are to underſtand in general, Frequent Meditations upon, and a continual Regard to that moſt Important Day. A having, as the Scripture calls it, *our Loins Girt, and our Lights burning*, A diſcharging our ſelves from the burdenſome Concerns of Life, and making all here ſit eaſie and looſe about us; and A Weaning our Affections from all ſuch Pleaſures, as might detain and divert us in our Chriſtian Courſe. And as Light is ſometimes with a peculiar Energy called *Shining*, thus it denotes an exemplary Piety, a Graceful Behaviour, and extraordinary

Luk. XII. 35.

Mat. V. 16

Diligence

Diligence in our Calling; A Conſcientious maintaining the Poſt we are appointed to, and anſwering all that can be expected from us in our reſpective Stations and Capacities. Thus our Lord explains himſelf in the Verſes next after my Text, and that one Inſtance is applicable to infinite others, *Who is a Faithful and Wiſe Servant, whom his Lord hath made Ruler over his Houſhold, to give them Meat in due Seaſon? Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing.* V. 45, 46.

2. Once more. In regard our Task is difficult, and our Avocations many; our Enemies Strong, and We of our ſelves but Weak, but very Weak; we are farther Adviſed and Commanded, to be frequent and diligent in calling in Succours from abroad; and applying our ſelves for Strength and Help, to Him who alone can, and who will not fail in his due time to deliver us. *Take ye heed,* (ſays Chriſt) *Watch and Pray, for ye know not when the Time is.* And in another place, *Watch ye therefore, and Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all thoſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man.* Our own Endeavours will do ſomething, and certain it is, that moſt men might do a great deal more, than either Mark XIII. 33. Luke XXI. 36.

they do, or think they can do, would they but ſet about their Buſineſs heartily, and in good earneſt.

——Δυνάμις γὰρ ἀνάγκης ἰσχυρὰ νικᾷ.

But ſtill, nothing can be a more fatal Injury to us, than the relying upon our own Strength and Diligence, ſuppoſing This to be never ſo Faithful, That to be never ſo Great. For the very Beſt of us all, (God help us) does not ſo far conquer the Infirmities of Humane Nature, as to be always upon his Guard, but will frequently find himſelf ſurpriſed; and hath therefore abundant occaſion to Pray, both that he may be forgiven his former Inadvertencies, and enabled to ſtand faſter for the time to come. Eſpecially to Intreat and Implore with all the Earneſtneſs and Holy Paſſion imaginable, that *In the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgment, the Good Lord would deliver him.* That the Laſt mighty Change, upon which the whole of his future Fate muſt depend, may not find him Idle or Unprovided, but Awake and Buſie, Diſcharged of every Weight, and his *Lamp lighted and trimm'd*, that when the *Bridegroom* appears, he may have nothing to do,

do, but to obey his Call, and *Go in with him to the Marriage.*

I proceed now in the laſt place to draw ſome few Inferences from what hath been ſaid, and ſo conclude.

1. And Firſt of all. We have here a very fair occaſion given us, of Contemplating the Exceeding Wiſdom and Juſtice of our Univerſal Judge. His Wiſdom is eminently ſeen, in taking ſuch a Courſe to inform Men of this Second Coming, as is, of all others, the moſt proper, and likely to put them upon Preparing for it; and This vindicates his Juſtice, when he Puniſhes all thoſe, who do not Prepare for it accordingly. That he will moſt aſſuredly come, as that reſpects both our own Death and the Laſt General Doom, we have all the Certainty imaginable: But as to the punctual preciſe time of either of theſe Comings, he hath left us as utterly uncertain. Now this very manner of Dealing is the Strongeſt Argument in the World for Care and Circumſpection. For had that Critical Minute been revealed to every particular Man, this had been the way to encourage Licentiouſneſs and Security. The Corrupt Inclinations of Fleſh and Blood might have taken mighty Advantage from hence, to per-

perſwade Men, that ſome little of the laſt remains of Life, the dregs of a Feeble old Age, would abundantly ſuffice to be dedicated to God; and a ſmall matter ſet all right between Them and ſo Gracious, ſo Forgiving a Maſter; That it were too much in all Reaſon to put themſelves under Reſtraints, and be perplexed for a Thing a great way off; and therefore they might ſafely indulge, and live at large, the Beginning of their Days at leaſt; and thus many would have laid hold on but too fair a Pretence, for a late Reformation and Death-bed Repentance. We ſee daily how apt Men are to run theſe Riſques, as the Caſe ſtands now; and may reaſonably preſume, they would have been much more bold in venturing their Souls, had it been otherwiſe. But as it is, there can be no colourable Excuſe for ſuch a wicked Negligence. For the particular inſtant of a thing's happening, is but an Accidental, and Extrinſecal Circumſtance, and does not in the leaſt take off from the Reality and Certainty of the Thing. The Promiſes and Predictions of God are unchangeable in this point; Where Eternal Truth ſtands engaged, the thing ſubſiſts in his Decree already; and what he hath ſo ſaid ſhall be brought to paſs, we ought to eſteem as Certain,

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(and in truth it is as certain every whit) as if our own Eyes beheld it now, performed in every Circumſtance. Come he will, That's beyond all Queſtion. But whether in *the firſt*, or *the ſecond*, or *the third*, or *the fourth Watch*, we cannot tell; And for this reaſon we ought to be extreamly circumſpect, and to watch always. Death and Judgment may overtake our Infancy, or they may ſnatch us away in the Heat and Bloom of Youth; or they may cruſh our riper and more confirmed Years; ſo that Health and Vigour will juſtifie no Man's being unprovided; But if they ſhould delay till *the fourth Watch*, till Old Age and Grey Hairs ſhed themſelves upon our heads, yet ſtill this Forbearance does not prove, either that they might not have broke in upon us ſooner, or that they will never do it at all. Againſt the former our Saviour uſes this very Motive to Caution in my Text; and to the latter I may very properly apply that paſſage of the Prophet *Habakuk* concerning his Viſion; *It is* (ſays he) *for an Appointed Time, at the End it ſhall ſpeak and not lie, though it tarry, yet wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry.* Mark XIII. 35. Habak II. 3.

2. Secondly, What hath been ſaid upon this Subject may ſerve for a very juſt Reproof to the Unreaſonableneſs and Vanity of ſuch Men, as are eternally

eternally bewailing the ſhortneſs of Life, and uttering ſuch Complaints, as ſeem to inſinuate, that God deals hardly with Mankind, in allowing them no longer a ſpace for the working out their Salvation. *My Brethren let no man deceive you with vain words*, Almighty God is a Fair and a Bountiful Maſter. He affords every one abundant Opportunities for the Work appointed him to do. Were They only to be accounted Long-liv'd, who have finiſhed the Task and Buſineſs of Life, then (God knows) the Generality of People live but a very little while. But the Queſtion in this caſe muſt not be, whether ſuch Men have actually wrought out their Salvation, but whether or no, ſuppoſing them to make the beſt uſe of their time, they might not have done it, if they would. And the true Chriſtian way of Computation is to meaſure Life by the Improvements made of it, rather than by a Term or number of Years, be they never ſo many. He that dies Old in Virtue, can never be ſo Young, as to die untimely; and he that is a ſtranger to this, tho' he ſhould equal the years of *Methuſalem*, yet as to all the true purpoſes of Living, is an Infant ſtill. In a word, If Men will trifle away their precious Hours, when they are perpetually told how much depends

pends upon them, the Fault is their own, and who can help it? The ſhorteſt Life is ſufficient to bring a Man to Heaven, that will be Diligent and Careful, and therefore the ſhorteſt Life is long enough. For ten thouſand Ages can do no more; and to the Idle, the Senſual, and Secure, even thoſe ten thouſand Ages would be every whit as much too ſhort.

3. Thirdly and Laſtly. From what went before it does likewiſe appear, with what Prudence and Piety our Holy Mother the Church of *England* teaches all her Children to deprecate the Miſery, and Judgment of a *Sudden Death*. Sudden I mean in reſpect of its ſelf, when it is not uſher'd in by any preceding Sickneſs, or ſuch viſible ſinkings of Nature, as God is commonly pleaſed to ſend before, for the more awakening ſignifications of his laſt great Call. 'Tis true indeed, not *knowing what hour the Lord doth come*, we ſhould expect him every hour; and the Suddeneſt Death will be no excuſe to them that do not ſo; but yet we have a great deal of Reaſon to wiſh and to pray, that ſo important a Change may approach with ſomething of Warning and Solemnity. The beſt of us all after his niceſt Preparation will find employment enough for his laſt hours; and I am apt to believe it is very difficult even for Good men in health and vigour to bring themſelves into ſo ſerious a frame of mind, with regard to the next world, as he may, who ſees and

feels himself Just upon the brink of it. A new Scene of things and thoughts then opens it self; such as kindles a Zeal sometimes, where it was not before, and makes it burn brighter, where it was. And oft we see such glad foretasts of Bliss, as abundantly compensate the bodily pains, and make all a Good man's *bed in his sickness*. Besides all This, to be assisted with the Advice of our Spiritual Guides, to be strengthned with the *Viaticum* of the Church, the Sacrament and Seal of our Redemption, to be recommended by the Intercessions of our parting Friends; These are mighty Comforts and Advantages. So that a lingering Disease, which usually passes for a great Affliction, is in this respect a Great Blessing; for while Death makes regular and leisurly advances, he deals with us like a Fair Enemy, calls aloud to the Field, and bids us make ready for the Combat. But to be hurried away into Eternity in a Trice; To have Body and Soul torn asunder at one stroke, without one poor Minute or two allowed to take leave, without one *Lord have mercy upon me* at the last gasp! Jesus defend us! for sure this cannot but seem a dreadful thing to every considering Christian. We will wish then, and we will pray earnestly, that God would not deal so with us; but since it is possible, that he may use This as well as any other Method of calling us to himself, it will be as much as Heav'n and our Souls are worth, to take care that the suddenest *Death* may not be

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ſudden in reſpect of Us, but that we be always *watchful* and upon our Guard, Provided and Ready, and therefore eſpecially ſo, becauſe, as my Text tells us, *In ſuch an hour as we think not, the Son of Man cometh.*

And now, Were it neceſſary (as I hope, after what hath been ſaid, it is not,) to urge this Duty yet farther upon you, I promiſe my ſelf that could not be done more ſucceſsfully, than by propoſing to Your Imitation that Royal Example, which ought, and certainly will not ceaſe, to live in our Remembrance and Admiration, as long as Time and Memory themſelves ſhall laſt. But the Endeavouring to repreſent This, is attended with many *Difficulties*. For Bright Patterns in Chriſtianity, and Maſter-pieces in Nature, are what a Man may ſhew reſpectful Intentions in Drawing, but there are few hands ſo Maſterly, that their Art and Colours can ever come up to the Life. Beſides, Your own Recollection can give you more lively Images of this kind, than all the Words in the World are able to expreſs; and *Happy ſure were You, her Servants, who ſtood continually before Her,* and ſaw and *heard her Wiſdom* and Goodneſs. Happy indeed, if you ſo ſaw, and ſo recollect, as in your own Lives to expreſs thoſe Graces, which rendred Her the Glory and Ornament of her Age, and Sex; the moſt conſpicuous, not of Queens only, but of Wives and Women; and to every Humble, and Charitable, and Devout Chriſtian, a Pattern of Prudence. 1 *King* x. 8.

dence, and Piety, and Condescension; of all that Sweetness and Good Nature, which Religion, and nothing but Religion, can inspire Men with. But the Enlarging upon This Subject in This Place, and This Presence, would be apt to provoke a Passion, which, though it might sit well upon Friends and Attendants; yet ill agrees with the Reflections of a Christian, upon so Pious, so Majestick a Death. All therefore that I shall add is only This, That the Last Act of our Lives will depend upon those that go before; and the only way to Die as your Admirable Mistress did, is to Live as She did. When we can with Her declare, that our Provisions for Eternity are not to make at our Last Hours, Then, and not till Then, may we hope to attain to some competent Degree of Her Magnanimity, and Noble Resignation. Surprise is the most dangerous Distress, that can possibly befal us in that great Conflict; and They who have fenced themselves well against This, may with an Easiness and Composure, like Hers, look the King of Terrors in the Face, and Triumph ev'n in Death. And may the Illustrious Virtues of our Sovereign excite this commendable Emulation in us all, That we may not only attend and rejoyce about her Heav'nly, as we did here about her Earthly Throne, but (which could not be done here) that we may partake of, and share That Crown with her for Ever! Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant for Jesus Christ his sake. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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